

CRACKLIN' STATIC



SIERRA NEVADA Amateur Radio Society

Serving the Amateur Radio Community since April 16, 1968

<http://www.snars.org>

RENO, NEVADA

SUMMER 2017

FIELD DAY 2017 SPECIAL EDITION

This special Field Day edition of CRACKLIN' STATIC contains no President's Voice, no masthead, no minutes or technical articles, calendars, etc., just the story and photos of SNARS Field Day, 2017, the highs, the lows, and the people who made it happen. No official stuff, just FD! Read on, and enjoy.....73, Howie WB2AWQ

Again this year SNARS set up Field Day at Washoe Lake State Park in the equestrian section. While this section has no decent trees for hanging antennas, between Jim Shepherd's (W6US) monster transportable tower, some independent standalone antennas, and, yes, even a couple of trees, we managed once again to get enough wire and aluminum into the air to radiate quite well. Mother Nature didn't surprise us with any cooling downpours, but temperatures were well up there not far from last years' 105 degree recording. Additionally, this year we had more "company" of the tiny flying variety, courtesy of a rather full Washoe Lake.

THE SITE



Washoe Lake Equestrian Area, with an awe inspiring view of Slide Mountain and Mt Rose photo KF7KTC

THE BEAST – 2017

OK so who among us has a 100 ft tower? Probably a few. Who among us has one that's transportable??? W6US!



W6US transportable tower (collapsed) photo KM6CQ
Now, beams are not too uncommon at Field Day sites. 15-20 feet, maybe 30 feet is typical. 100 feet, not so much!

With Jim's portable tower, we are most likely one of a very few Field Day sites with one that tall. And given the dearth of suitable trees at the Equestrian Area at Washoe Lake, Jim's tower does multi-antenna duty. Besides the trap triband beam on a mast atop the tower, there are also several dipoles hung at one end from the tower proper, enabling at least some height for those dipoles.



Jim W6US on the tower before raising photo KM6CQ

Putting up Jim's tower is a lot of work, requiring a number of people on the ground, guying and guiding things into place, and assembling the beam and other antenna hanging equipment. Everyone in the working area of the tower during assembly and raising is required to wear a hard hat, with good reason.

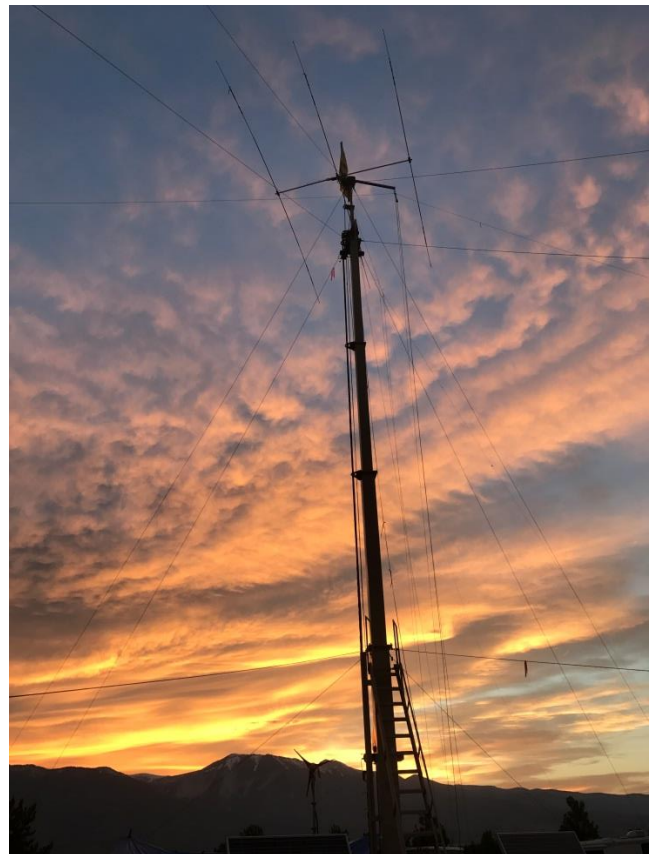
It takes several hours hard work to get the tower raised and ready to use, and the process is repeated in reverse at the end of Field Day, again with a number of dedicated hands, all in hard hats.



Even the serious business of raising a tower needs some humor.....
photo KB2SFS



The tower before the guys are secured photo KM6CQ



The business end of the tower photo KB2SFS

FOOD

No serious Field Day operation is complete without a good deal of food. Operating radios for 24 hours straight demands a skilled, coordinated logistics team. This year Mike N7MSK, Eugene KB7JZO, and Jon KF7KTC, all experienced hands at feeding a hungry crew, did the honors, coming up with Saturday breakfast, lunch, and a terrific BBQ dinner, and Sunday breakfast and lunch. No one went hungry, all the food was safely handled, and they kept everyone hydrated. No easy chore in 100 degree heat, with everything done outdoors.

Breakfast included bacon, eggs, waffles (homemade, not storebought!), home fries, etc. Only the best!



Jon KF7KTC working on breakfast photo KF7KTC

Lunch was a wide assortment of cold cuts, rolls, all the fixin's and chips, and was done both Saturday and Sunday.

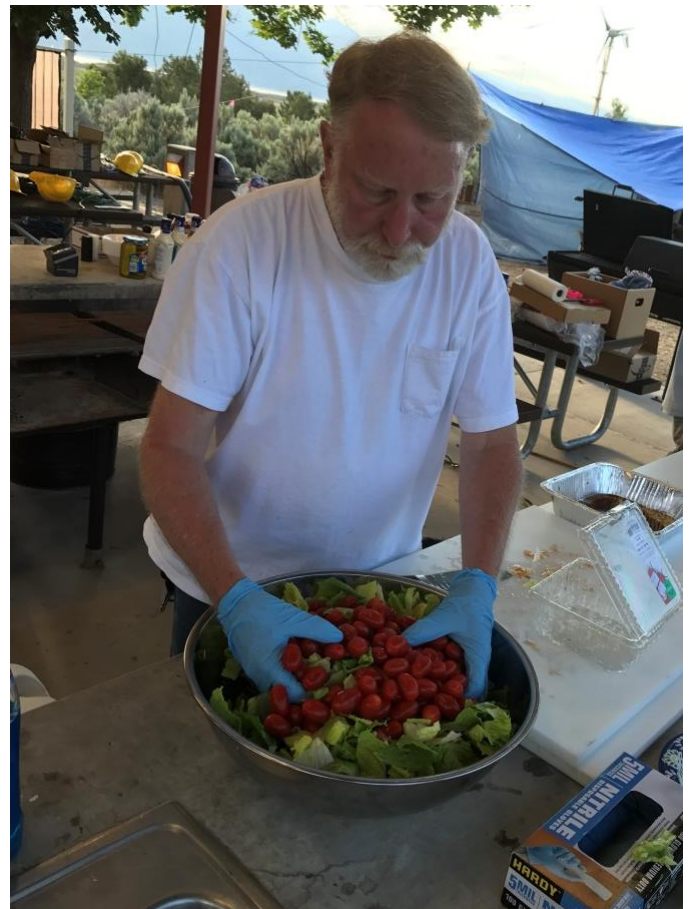


Lunch for the troops photo K7BXB

Dinner was a feast, for both the eyes and the stomach! Tri-tips done expertly by KB7JZO, a big tossed salad, macaroni salad, and, for those few who didn't go for tri-tips, burgers n dogs.



Jon and Eugene KB7JZO Prepping food for Saturday BBQ photo KF7KTC



A garden-fresh tossed salad photo KB2SFS



Tri-tips anyone?

Photo KF7KTC



Something new at SNARS Field Day – chili made by KF7KTC. (No the dog didn't get any..... or did she?) FYI we'll publish the recipe soon! photo KB2SFS



Hungry operators chowing down BBQ. Mike N7MSK (center, in the white shirt and cowboy hat) oversees the bounty. photo KF7KTC



Looks like one great meal!

Photo KF7KTC

THE OPERATORS

While not the only activity, operating is the main event at Field Day for most Amateurs. For many of us, it means a full 24 hours of continuous operation, a long haul but most satisfying. SNARS operates CW, phone, and digital stations for Field Day, powered from gas generators, and this year, **the digital operations were powered solely by alternative energy sources.** Solar and wind power provided all the juice for the digital stations set up by Jim W6US. Aided by the tri-band beam atop the 100 ft tower!



W6US and Dave KF7EGU doing digital

photo KB2SFS

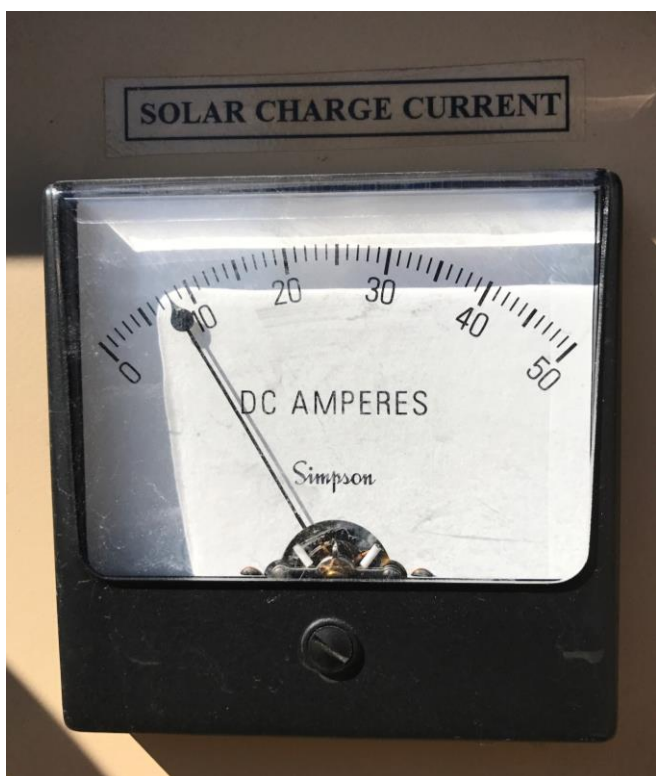


The solar panel and wind generator photo KB2SFS

Using an alternative energy source for a minimum number of contacts earns our station 100 bonus points. While Jim could have switched to generator power, he elected to continue on solar and wind.



Rob NB6C on 20M phone photo KB2SFS
Note the cleverly disguised can of Coke behind Rob's computer....



Those solar panels really do work! Photo KM6CQ

Phone stations were ably handled by Rob NB6C on 20M, Peter KE7VSR on 40, and Tony W7XM on various bands. Rob was using a 33 year-old Kenwood TS-440S, one of Kenwood's most popular radios, and still an excellent field radio.



Rob's standalone 20M beam photo KM6CQ

This is a fine example of setting up effective antennas under "less than ideal" conditions!



Peter KE7VSR on 40 phone

photo KF7KTC

Peter used a newly-acquired Max-Gain Systems Inc. MK-6-HD Extend 43 foot push-up fiberglass mast. It's a heavy-duty job, 2-1/2 inch diameter at the base, and with 1/8" thick-wall fiberglass sections. Each section is locked in place with a very handy lever-operated clamp. Quick, positive, and well made. This is not the typical "fishing pole" variety! His mast held the far end of an end-fed wire, and later on one end of a G5RV antenna.



Peter's new 43 ft push-up mast

photo KM6CQ

Tony W7XM and other operators handled a variety of bands filling in the gaps on phone, including 15M. One of Tony's guests was Joy KI7DDT, who was treated to a lengthy discourse on HF operations. Tony also recorded

Joy's voice into the automatic CQ program. Nice cheating Tony.....



Tony and Joy KI7DDT

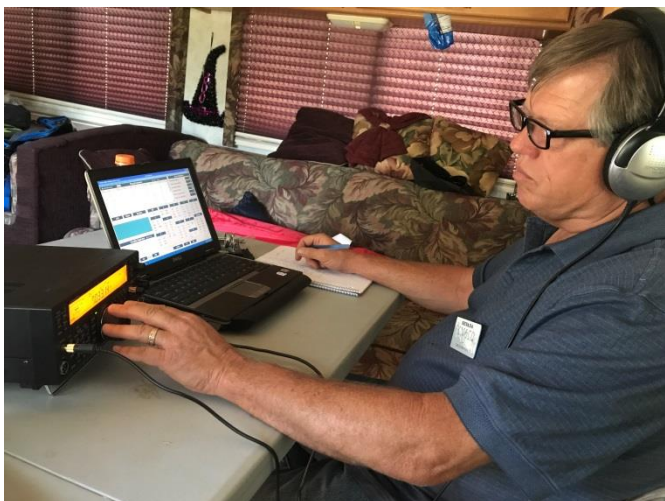
photo KB2SFS

The CW operators generally contribute the most QSOs (and points) to any Field Day operation score, and SNARS is no exception. It's the simplest mode of operation, requiring the least sophisticated equipment, and the human ear is ideally suited to pulling a single tone out of a hodge-podge of signals. When you add in a narrow filter, you have an excellent QSO machine. Of course, it DOES require some special operator skill, which on its own can correct for equipment deficiencies. This year, along with the usual combo of WB2AWQ (whose time at FD was very limited) and KB2SFS, we added another CW op to the mix in the form of Dan KM6CQ.



Ken KB2SFS

photo KM6CQ



Dan KM6CQ

photo KM6CQ

An important aspect of Field Day is publicity, including usually some sort of public information booth. For SNARS, that booth, a handsome gazebo with the SNARS logo, contains lots of visitor literature along with someone to welcome visitors and answer questions, and also includes a VHF station both for check-ins to the FD site, and for making FD contacts. The check-ins are usually done through a repeater, but FD contacts must be done without use of a repeater.



The SNARS Visitor Booth. Note Jon's "Hentenna"

photo KF7KTF

Jon describes the preceding photo of the visitors booth: *"Shot of the Visitor's Booth and "Hentenna" setup, with John (don't know last name or call sign), who did a lot of the attempts at contacting stations on 146.52. We had six (6) FM contacts on 2m. One simplex contact by me was to Silver Springs, which was made on the null-side of the antenna, over the Virginia Range. Transmitter power was 75 watts. Reception was about a RS 44. Another simplex contact by me was to Pyramid lake, and the reception was as good as on a repeater."* (Editor's note: from our campsite to the extreme low end of Pyramid Lake is 43 miles, and goes over a couple of mountain ranges! A pretty good shot for a low gain antenna up only 12 ft or so.)



Jon and "John" at the visitors booth photo KB2SFS

(Editor's note: If you are "John" in this photo please contact me so you can be properly recognized! Thanks WB2AWQ)

A FEW PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:

Ken Holden KB2SFS (CW op):

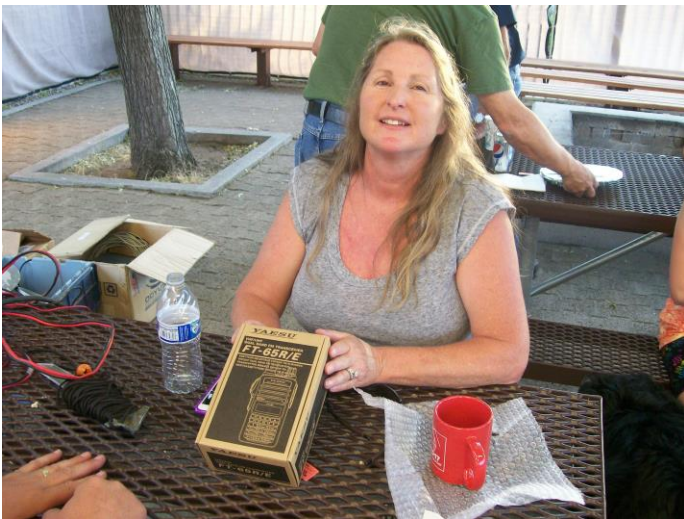
Another great field day is in the books! My early morning arrival to the Washoe Lake Campground was met with an exciting view of Jim Shepherd's tower already set to go yet again. I can only imagine the work it takes to get that tower up, and it's great to know a handful of members dropped by the evening before to help out. This year, my trusty sidekick (or am I his sidekick?), and Dad Howie, WB2AWQ, would not be joining me for the full weekend, as he recovers from a hospital visit. Nonetheless, I came prepared to operate 4 bands...no, not at the same time. With dad on the injured reserve, Dan, KM6CQ would be joining the CW team. Dad would still be with us in spirit, while copying W1AW for bonus points. Together, Dan and I would cover 20, 40, and 80 CW.

Rule of thumb is that the first thing you check on is the food situation. I was relieved to see Eugene KB7JZO and Jon KF7KTC would once again be manning the grill. Knowing that my dog DJ, and Rob's dog Kona would be well fed, and that the future of my appetite was in good hands, I got right to setting up.

Shortly after my arrival, Rob, NB6C, arrived with his air-conditioned RV. The Kegerator wasn't installed quite yet, but it's Field Day, so I settled for "roughing it". Over 20 field days under my belt, and I've got to say, 24 hours of operation is a lot easier with an RV (sorry, Dad). (Wuss....ed)

Rob manned 20m phone underneath the main picnic area, while Tony, W7XM had a QRP station nearby. Jim, W6US was running multi-band digital right next to his tower. With the exception of his computer monitor, the entire setup was on solar and wind power! Bonus points! When Jon wasn't helping out with food, he was underneath the SNARS tent, on the GOTA station. While the weather was beautiful, temps topped out at 96 degrees, so staying cool was key. The picnic area was not only the coolest spot, it was filled with member and visitors throughout the weekend.

Jon Fox came up with a potent, yet delicious chili for lunch/dinner, while Eugene grilled up one of the finest tri-tips I've ever had for the evening BBQ. Food for W7TA's field day was some of the best I've had since we joined in 2010, thanks to these guys. Rob Dunbar's wife won the Yaesu HT that was given away by the club. Hopefully, she'll share it with Rob.



Kelly, XYL of Rob NB6C shows off the Yaesu HT she won for a Field Day door prize photo KF7KTC

Peter DeBay KE7VSR made a fashionably late, though much appreciated, arrival, and made quick work of getting 40 meter phone up and running.

As the sun began to set, it was already clear that 40 and 80 would be wide open all night. Dan and I worked feverishly into the evening as CW side of things got busier and busier.

Jay N7TOC stopped by and operated 80 phone or something through the wee hours.

Shortly after midnight, Dan took a break from 40 CW, and my trusty partner, aka Dad, would arrive. Howie, WB2AWQ, though still in recovery, couldn't quite stay away, and managed to escape for several late night hours, racking up over 70 QSO's between 12:30 and 4am! I personally hope the comfy experience of Rob's RV will convince him that maybe a tent isn't always the best route for Field Day. I used this opportunity for some shut eye.



KM6CQ (L) and KB2SFS (R)

photo KM6CQ

Howie Holden WB2AWQ (CW op):

Due to a recent health scare, I was only able to devote a few hours to Field Day. I figured the best use of my limited time would be in the wee hours of the morning, when the bands are at their best, but the operators are not! For two hours the bands – or at least 40 meters CW - was indeed very open. Made a decent number of contacts, coast to coast including Hawaii and Alaska, then, like someone threw a switch, the band changed suddenly. The Hawaiians were still coming in OK, the JA stations, who were having a contest of their own, were all of a sudden BOOMING in, S9 plus a lot. The continental U.S.? It was like everyone went to sleep! The band had gone very long, not at all unusual for 40, especially around a sunspot minimum. It's one of the reasons it's such a popular and diverse band. Sorry I missed the great BBQ (I did hear all about it, and not one discouraging word was uttered!), and for sure I missed seeing everyone during the day on Saturday. Wait til next year.....//HH

Jim Shepherd W6US (the FD chair and digital op):

How did we do?

We did good! 592 contacts were made by the operators this year. 360 were put in the log by the CW team of Ken, Dan and Howie for 720 points. Jim got 79 digital contacts for 158 points, and the voice operators got 153 contacts for 153 points, a grand total of 1031 points which was multiplied by 2 for using 150 watts or less on the transmitters. We got 1450 bonus points for 100% emergency power, solar & wind power, copying the Field Day message, being in a public location with an information booth, having a safety officer, and a presence on social media. A claimed total of 3512 points was submitted.

No contacts were made on 160 and 10 meters, and Tony was only able to dig up 7 contacts on 15. 40 meters was the best band with 138 CW, 77 phone and 37 digital contacts with 20, 80 and 2 meters filling out the log. A pleasant surprise was 7 simplex contacts on 2 meters made by Jon on a homebuilt antenna.

We contacted 71 of the 83 of the ARRL and RAC sections, and surprisingly did not have any DX stations. Western Washington was our most contacted section with 9 QSOs. Hawaii and the US Virgin Islands were the only offshore stations in the log.

This was a good showing considering the low sunspot numbers and some equipment compromises.



Ya gotta love our sunsets.....

Photo W6US

THANKS

An operation like SNARS Field Day would not be possible without a big effort from a lot of people. First and foremost, thanks to Jim Shepherd W6US, the Field Day chair and Drill Sergeant. Without Jim's constant attention and keeping people on their toes, Field Day wouldn't have happened. The food guys – Mike Katz N7MSK, Eugene Weidenbeck KB7JZO, and Jon Fox KF7KTC pulled off arguably the best SNARS food expo ever. Huge kudos to them! And Jon, besides doing food duty, was instrumental in manning the visitors booth and getting the 2M station set up. Field Day also couldn't really happen without all the unrecognized members who help with setup and teardown. The operators are the stars of the show from the contest perspective: Jim W6US, whose digital scores climb every year, Peter KE7VSR and Rob NB6C who always put in 110% doing phone duty, the CW gang, this year consisting of Ken KB2SFS (what can I say, I taught him, or more precisely, told him to go learn CW), and the new guy on the block Dan KM6CQ who loved it and promises to come back again next year with a vengeance. Other operators Tony W7XM (you know him, our Prez) who scrounged up some QSOs on 15 phone (I listened from home on 15 Saturday afternoon, and it was dead, so good work Tony), Dave KE7FGU who kibitzed both the phone and digital ops, Jay N7TOC, who did some phone operating overnight, and John(?) (no call known) who helped at the visitors booth and made some great 2M contacts. Last, thanks to the photographers among us, who produced such great pictures for this: Jon KF7KTC, Ken KB2SFS, Dan KM6CQ, Jim W6US and Jere K7BXB. If I missed anyone, please accept my apologies. And if anyone comes up with more FD stuff, let me know and we can put it to a future edition of Cracklin Static. See you next year, wherever we have SNARS Field Day! 73, Howie WB2AWQ